



# **Thinking Green**

## **East Gwillimbury's Environmental Strategy**



"As a community, we want to shift our thinking away from policy-based practices and return to our tradition of caring for our environment as we care for our family. So, it is easier to start putting together things that are not so policy-driven, but they happen because it is a natural thing to do. It is good to have policies in place, but we also want to care from a best practices perspective instead of a reactive one."

**Brandon Stiles, Environmental Director  
Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation  
June 2023**

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## Message from Mayor and Council



Council is pleased to present East Gwillimbury's Environmental Strategy. Our municipality has a long-standing history of implementing and exploring various initiatives that enhance and protect our environment and this document formalizes our plans in one place. This Strategy and the actions, policies, events, and initiatives included within it outline our plans to prioritize and support the environment around us.

As a Council, we're committed to building a sustainable future for East Gwillimbury that supports ways for our residents, businesses, and the community to thrive.

The 2022 to 2026 Strategic Plan is our commitment

to residents that we will continue to focus our efforts and decisions on finding ways to improve, enhance, and do better. As part of that Plan, Environmental Stewardship is a priority for East Gwillimbury, and our collective corporate actions will lead us towards our goal of sustainability. We have an obligation to protect our natural environment while mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts.

Thank you to everyone who helped develop this strategy. We received numerous ideas and suggestions through workshops, public engagement opportunities and a survey. This input was instrumental in developing a Strategy that reflects our goals as a community and our role as a local municipality. Together we must protect the environment for the well-being of future generations.

**(Photo left to right: Councillor Terry Foster, Councillor Lorelea Carruthers, Councillor Susan Lahey, Mayor Virginia Hackson, Councillor Scott Crone, Councillor Tara Roy-DiClemente, and Councillor Brian Johns)**

## Message from the CAO

On behalf of our staff, I'm pleased to share East Gwillimbury's Environmental Strategy. The development of this document was community driven, and I appreciate the suggestions, feedback, and ideas that went into creating it. Environmental protection and stewardship are everyone's responsibility and our organization is committed to building a future where we use a sustainability lens when making decisions.

In the most recent census, East Gwillimbury was noted as Canada's fastest-growing municipality. As we grow, we have an obligation to protect and restore our environment.

It is my hope that doing what's right for the environment and making responsible decisions will come naturally to everyone much like turning off a light when we leave a room. I believe that as we continue to use a sustainability lens and build on the framework in this strategy, we can achieve a greener future.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in developing this Strategy. Your thoughts and feedback show that this is a priority for our community. This is an important step in our journey together and we will continue to build and grow on the framework started here.

**Mark Valcic, Chief Administrative Officer**



## Land Acknowledgment

*The Town of East Gwillimbury recognises and acknowledges the lands originally used and occupied by the First Peoples of the Williams Treaties First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples, and on behalf of the Mayor and Council, we would like to thank them for sharing this land.*

*We would also like to acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation as EG's closest First Nation community and recognize the unique relationship the Chippewas have with the lands and waters of this territory. They are the water protectors and environmental stewards of these lands, and we join them in these responsibilities.*



## Acknowledgment

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of East Gwillimbury's Environmental Strategy. First and foremost, this document could not have been developed without the thoughts, ideas and support from East Gwillimbury residents. Your participation and enthusiasm in sharing your enviro vision, environmental concerns and interests helped shape every step of this journey.

To the East Gwillimbury Environmental Advisory Committee, thank you for your support, constant feedback and insight. External partners and collaborators from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, Regional Municipality of York, Clean Air Council, and Canada Wildlife Federation also contributed to the development of the Strategy through their review and feedback.

Special thanks to Brandon Stiles, Alyssa Warren, and Joseph Goode from the Chippewas Georgina Island First Nation who shared their holistic view of the environment and who helped frame this strategy from a caring perspective.

Finally, thanks to Council for their vision and strategic direction that allowed this Strategy to come to life and to Town and EG Library staff who participated and provided insightful information and comments.

This is truly a collaborative document which will guide our collective efforts in the future.

# Introduction to EG's Environmental Strategy

East Gwillimbury's (EG) Environmental Strategy is a robust set of actions that support the municipality's commitment to protect and restore the natural environment as the municipality grows. The Strategy aligns with various corporate and community initiatives that promote environmental stewardship in our community, outlines the environmental actions EG has taken, and identifies gaps, opportunities, and next steps. This is a living document, where the actions will be continuously reviewed and updated to reflect and leverage local, regional, provincial, and national opportunities to protect and restore the environment.

The Strategy is a guide for residents, businesses, and staff to prioritize and implement environmental actions in their daily lives and at work. It is based on an extensive analysis of the local, regional, provincial, and national context<sup>i</sup>, a deep corporate and community engagement process<sup>ii</sup>, and close consideration of local and regional opportunities. This Strategy directly aligns with the Council approved Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026.

## Environmental Strategy - Vision and Mission

The Strategy builds on the goal to preserve and protect EG's environment.

### Our Vision

To be a resilient and sustainable community that connects to, protects, and restores its environment.

### Our Mission

Protect and restore our environment as we grow.



Photo submitted by Robert Alsop

<sup>i</sup> See Appendix 1: Background Information and Policy Context.

<sup>ii</sup> See Engagement Process.

# Introduction to EG's Environmental Strategy

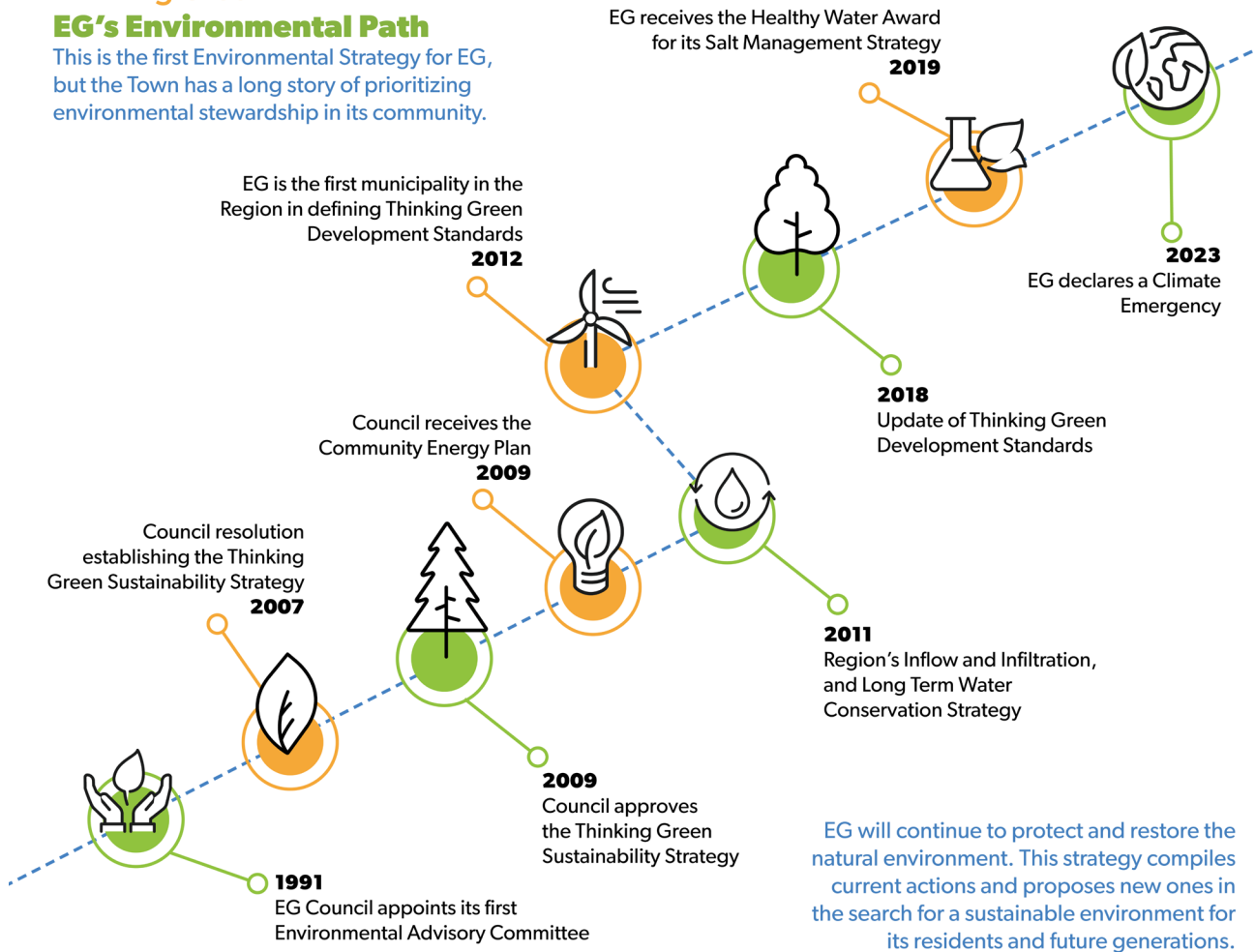
## Timeline

EG's commitment towards creating a diverse, resilient, and sustainable community dates back many years. The timeline below shows environmental milestones in EG, starting with the appointment of the Environmental Advisory Committee.

### Thinking Green

#### EG's Environmental Path

This is the first Environmental Strategy for EG, but the Town has a long story of prioritizing environmental stewardship in its community.



## Public Engagement Process – What's your Enviro Vision?

Several community meetings with partners, stakeholders, collaborators, community workshops and events, an online survey, and a photo contest were held between February and September 2023 to collect feedback on environmental programs in EG and to identify the community's environmental concerns and interests.

Approximately 50 members of the public participated in the in-person and virtual Enviro Vision Community Workshops, where they shared their interests, concerns, and priorities for the environment. Other opportunities to share feedback included an online survey, which received a total of 42 responses, a booth at the EG Farmers Market, and one-on-one resident meetings.

Through these engagement exercises, different stakeholders shared a desire to better connect with municipal programs and for the Town to include more environmental actions focused on policy, education, and engagement in their operations. As a result, the Environmental Strategy was created to guide environmental initiatives and track progress. The ultimate goal is to be a community that fosters a healthy environment.

# Environmental Thematic Areas

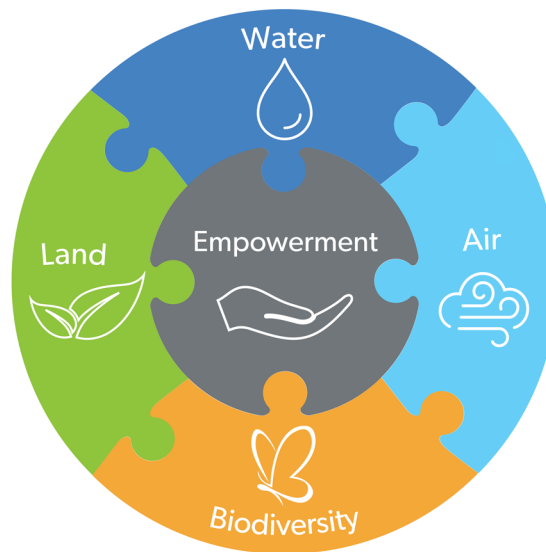
This Strategy is made up of five thematic areas. Four areas reflect a holistic view of the environment, and the fifth, empowerment, reflects community action as the key element that enables, interacts, and impacts all the other elements. This strategy connects the corporate and community perspective while aligning with regional, provincial, and federal policies and guidelines.

## Thematic Areas

**Empowerment:** embrace and support internal and external education, events, and action for all thematic areas.

**Water:** Initiatives that impact water quality and conservation.

**Land:** Forests, gardens, parks, land use, planning, buildings, and practices such as waste production and diversion, and recycling.



**Air:** Air quality, greenhouse emissions, air pollutants, active transportation.

**Biodiversity:** Living organisms, plants and animals that are part of the natural landscape and the protection of wildlife.

## How To Read This Strategy

Each section starts with a description and objective of the area, the most illustrative achievement in that area, and initiatives moving forward.

Each thematic area includes a list of actions that EG will be executing in the short, medium, and long term, which are further broken down into four categories that will advance environmental stewardship.

The four categories that will be explored more in each area are:

**Policy:** Town policies that promote, advocate for, and influence sustainable practices.

**Legislation:** Town by-laws that regulate development, land use and planning.

**Operation:** Town delivery of services, including using buildings, equipment, vehicles, and technology.

**Events and Education:** Initiatives to educate, inspire, and engage with the community.



# What is the Connection Between Climate Change and the Environmental Strategy?

Climate change is the most complex global environmental challenge. It involves several dimensions and impacts every aspect of our society such as the economy, health, infrastructure, services, etc. In the context of this Strategy and its five thematic areas, climate change actions are included in the Air theme, and reflected in the other themes as well. EG is developing a Community and Corporate Energy Plan and a Climate Adaptation Plan to give climate change the focus it needs.

The Community and Corporate Energy Plan will address climate change mitigation through the improvement of energy efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Climate Adaptation Plan will refer to actions that will better prepare EG to face the impacts of climate change.

## How Does Climate Change Impact the Other Thematic Areas?

**Water:** Increasing water temperature and changing composition, including unpredictable and extreme rainfall, floods, and droughts.

**Land:** Ecosystems are affected by changing and varying weather events, including soil erosion and a decrease in soil health.



**Empowerment:** Climate change requires urgent action. Engagement, education, and action are essential to mitigate and adapt to climate change in our community.

**Biodiversity:** Changes in natural ecosystems, including the accelerated extinction of native species and accelerated expansion of invasive species.



Photo submitted by Lori King. Lori's mom still picking up litter at 85 years young.

"Nature is not a place to visit; it's home!"  
East Gwillimbury Resident during the Community Workshops  
March 2023

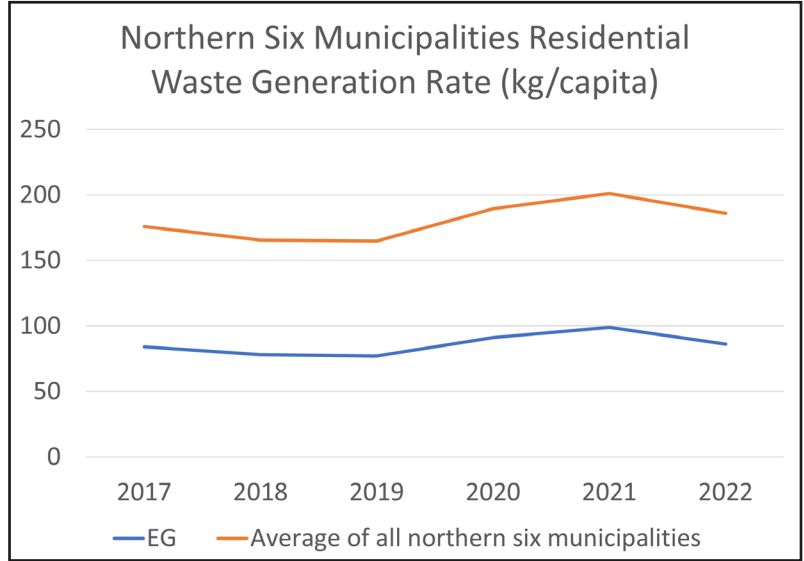
# Land

## Achievements

### Waste Production and Diversion

From 2017 to 2020, EG was the lowest producer of residential waste per person among the six northern municipalities of York Region<sup>i</sup> and the second lowest in 2021.

EG achieved 68% diversion in 2020, which was higher than the Canadian average of 49%, provincial average of 50%, and regional average of 66%.



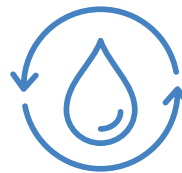
### Textile Collection

The Town's textile collection program, delivered in partnership with Diabetes Canada, started in 2020. Total diversion since the start of the program is 60,904 tonnes. 19,144 kg of textile waste was diverted from landfills from 2020 to 2021. In 2022, 22,260 kg of textile waste was diverted from landfills, and 19,500 kg in 2023. The graphic below shows the equivalent kg of textiles diverted in total carbon emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>e) avoided since the beginning of the program.

### 60,904 kg of textiles diverted equals



62.5 million trees planted



367,890 litres of water saved



296 cars removed from roads

1,361 T/CO<sub>2</sub>e abated



<sup>i</sup> 84 kg in 2017, 78 kg in 2018, 77 kg in 2019, 91 kg in 2020, 99 kg in 2021, and 86 kg in 2022.

## Cleanup

Annually, EG hosts community cleanup events inviting members of the public to collect litter in public spaces. The program expanded in 2022 to provide litter cleanup kits (including garbage bags and gloves) for residents to organize their own events. Since the program started, more than 90 volunteers, families and groups have collected approximately 50 tons of litter.

## Objective

Protect, enhance, and restore the land through sustainable management of land resources.

## Initiatives

| Initiative   | Action  | Category             | Status      |
|--|---|----------------------|-------------|
| Waste Reduction and Diversion                                  | Update the waste reduction and diversion program  | Policy               | In progress |
| Blue Box Transition  | Assist with the transition of the Town Blue Box program to a provincially led recycling program   | Operation            | In progress |
| Urban Family Food Gardens                                      | Encourage and promote urban family food gardens   | Policy               | Proposed    |
| Community Gardens  | Develop a community garden policy   | Policy               | Proposed    |
| Circular Economy   | Promote the Circular Economy in the community   | Policy/<br>Education | Proposed    |
| Community Cleanup  | Organize and support community cleanup events   | Events               | In progress |
| Land Use Planning  | Land use planning (including promoting density around transport stations)   | Policy               | In progress |
| Thinking Green Development Standards                           | Update Thinking Green Development Standards, including promoting nature-based solutions (NBS) and low impact development (LID) for new and existing development | Policy               | In progress |
| Fill By-law  | Fill By-law and Guideline Update  | Legislation          | In progress |
| Sustainable Procurement  | Establish a sustainable procurement policy for the Town   | Policy               | Proposed    |
| Facilities and Parks Environmental Technology and Enhancements | Incorporate industry leading environmental technology with parks and facility capital projects  | Operation            | In progress |
| Environmental Lens in Decision Making                          | Develop and implement a process to include environmental lens in staff reports and presentations to Council   | Policy               | Proposed    |



Photo submitted by Meagan Potter

"Thinking for the future [is] necessary to improve green spaces, help against current environmental threats - loss of biodiversity, climate change, pollution, etc."

**East Gwillimbury resident during the community workshops  
March 2023**

## Achievements

### Inflow and Infiltration

In 2011, York Region developed a Region-wide Inflow and Infiltration Reduction Strategy (I&I Strategy). Developed in collaboration with the nine Regional municipalities, this Strategy was established to comply with an environmental assessment set by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Since implementing the I&I Strategy, EG has reduced 200,000 litres of infiltrated water into the sewer system daily<sup>ii</sup>. This was achieved through multiple rehabilitation programs and the introduction of the EG 2014 Sustainable Development Incentive Program (SDIP). The SDIP requires all new development to meet the sewer system program guidelines. This results in reduced water consumption, reduced wastewater production, more efficient infrastructure, reduced waste, and more energy efficient developments.

### Salt Management

In 2019, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority awarded a Healthy Water Award to the Town in recognition of the Town's Direct Liquid Application program. This anti-icing program's best practices are the proactive application of salt brine, modernization of road maintenance equipment, and staff development and training. Since the program was launched in 2013, salt application in EG decreased by approximately 78% per event.

| Summary of material used and kilometers maintained |                  |                          |                            |
|--|------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Winter Season                                      | Number of Events | Material per Event (ton) | Material per Lane km (ton) |
| 2013/14  | 43               | 280                      | 31                         |
| 2014/15  | 56               | 107                      | 16                         |
| 2015/16  | 44               | 90                       | 10                         |
| 2016/17  | 63               | 90                       | 13                         |
| 2017/18  | 53               | 85                       | 10                         |
| 2018/19  | 67               | 64                       | 10                         |
| 2019/20  | 59               | 65                       | 9                          |
| 2020/21  | 51               | 45                       | 5                          |
| 2021/22  | 64               | 43                       | 5                          |
| 2022/23  | 54               | 70                       | 6                          |

The Town's road and sidewalk network significantly increased since 2013, and the program continues to realize a reduction of the total material used for maintenance during winter events.

Reduction of salt making its way into our watercourses and lakes is very important. Chloride is highly soluble, and once it dissolves into water, there are no effective methods for removing it. Increasing salt concentration harms freshwater plants and animals and reduces the water's freezing point.

<sup>ii</sup> York Region, local municipalities and development industry partners have reduced I&I by more than 22 millions of litres per day (MLD). EG has the second lowest reduction target, this could be because of the smaller size of the system, or that EG's infrastructure is comparatively newer than other municipalities.

## Objective

Protect and promote the restoration of the health and function of natural water systems.

### Initiatives

| Initiative   | Action  | Category             | Status      |
|--|---|----------------------|-------------|
| Stormwater Management  | Develop and implement the Stormwater Master Plan                          | Policy               | In progress |
| Salt Management  | Continue improving/updating the Salt Management Plan                      | Operation            | In progress |
| Regional Inflow and Infiltration Strategy                                  | Continue implementing and improving the Inflow and infiltration strategy  | Policy and Operation | In progress |
| Regulatory Stormwater Environmental Compliance Approval (ECA) Requirements | Meet regulatory requirements  | Legislation          | In progress |
| Regulatory Sanitary Environmental Compliance Approval (ECA) Requirements   | Meet regulatory requirements  | Legislation          | In progress |
| Municipal Drain Program  | Develop and implement the Municipal Drain Program                         | Operation            | In progress |
| Riparian and buffer zones along water ways                                 | Explore the implementation of riparian and buffer zones                   | Policy and Education | Proposed    |
| Municipal Wetlands   | Collaborate to protect and restore municipal wetlands                     | Education            | Proposed    |
| Community Access to Watercourses   | Develop policies to promote and enhance community access to water courses | Policy               | Proposed    |



Photo submitted by Sandra Stover

"East Gwillimbury is growing very quickly. That means that we need to be especially careful to protect the environment and avoid irreversible damage to ecosystems and our community."

**East Gwillimbury Resident during the Community Workshops  
March 2023**



## Achievements

### Remote Service Delivery Model

In 2021, the Town reviewed remote work capability for each staff position. The review identified that 27% of staff have no remote work capability, 54% have partial remote capability, and 19% have full-time remote capability. The Town calculated<sup>iii</sup> that a hybrid work and remote service delivery model avoids 36 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year approximately.

### Less CO<sub>2</sub>e with the Hybrid Work and Remote Service Delivery Model equals



36 T/CO<sub>2</sub>e avoided



14 roundtrips from Vancouver to Halifax

9 Less vehicles on the roads



1,700 trees planted



## Objective

Improve local air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through healthy, connected, and efficient communities.

<sup>iii</sup> The calculation was made with six assumptions: 1) On average, employees spend at least 50 minutes commuting; 2) Average engine size per vehicle is 2.2 litres; 3) Partial remote means 2 days at the office and full-remote one day per week; 4) engine efficiency is 45.5 km/lit; 5) 1 lt of gasoline emits 2.3 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>; and 6) Staff receive an average of three weeks of vacations and take on average one week of sick leave.

## Initiatives

| Initiatives                         | Action   | Category    | Status      |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|
| Greenhouse gas emissions tracking   | Develop and implement a greenhouse gas emissions tracking system   | Operation   | In progress |
| Green Fleet Strategy                | Continue implementation of green-fleet vehicles  | Operation   | In progress |
| Electrification                     | Continue electrification of tools and equipment  | Operation   | In progress |
| Anti-Idling By-law                  | Promotion and education around anti-idling   | Legislation | Proposed    |
| Corporate and Community Energy Plan | Update the Corporate and Community Energy Plan   | Policy      | In progress |
| Active Transportation Master Plan   | Update and implement the Active Transportation Master Plan   | Policy      | In progress |
| Alternative Transportation          | Promote alternatives of transportation (Modal split) use of public transit and car sharing<br>Hybrid work    | Education   | Proposed    |
| Climate Change Adaptation Plan      | Develop a Climate Change Adaptation Plan focused on health and infrastructure                                | Policy      | In progress |
| Climate Lens in Decision Making     | Develop and implement a process to include climate change lens in staff reports and presentations to Council | Policy      | Proposed    |



Photo submitted by Richard Hardwood

"I live in Holland Landing because it has nature. We have water, forests, and rare prairie lands that make it special, and we should protect and encourage respectful use."

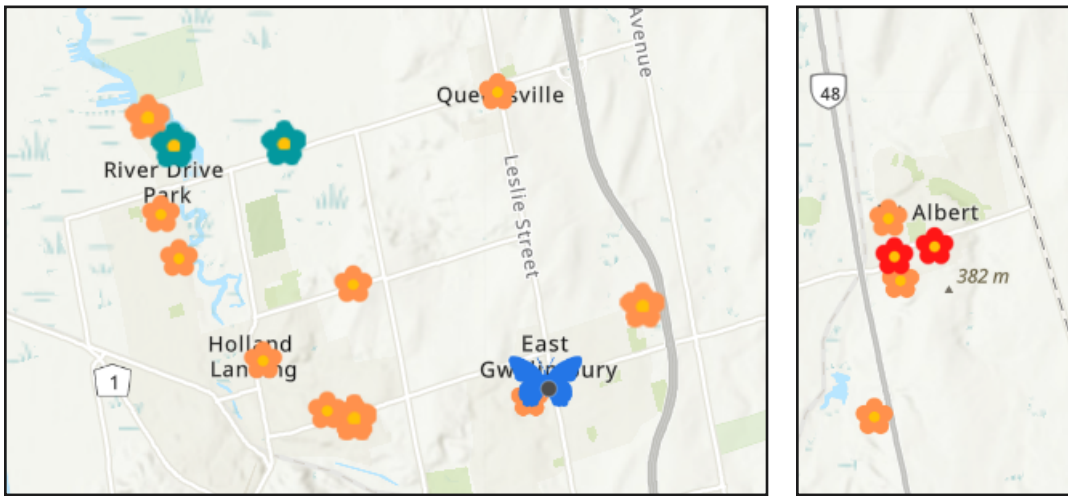
**East Gwillimbury Resident during the Community Workshops  
March 2023**

# Biodiversity

## Achievements

### Pollinator Gardens

In 2022, EG became part of the Butterflyway with 15 pollinator gardens in the community. This David Suzuki Foundation (Butterflyway Project) community-based initiative promotes the implementation of pollinator gardens with native wildflowers to create butterfly-friendly corridors in urban habitats for butterflies and other important pollinators.

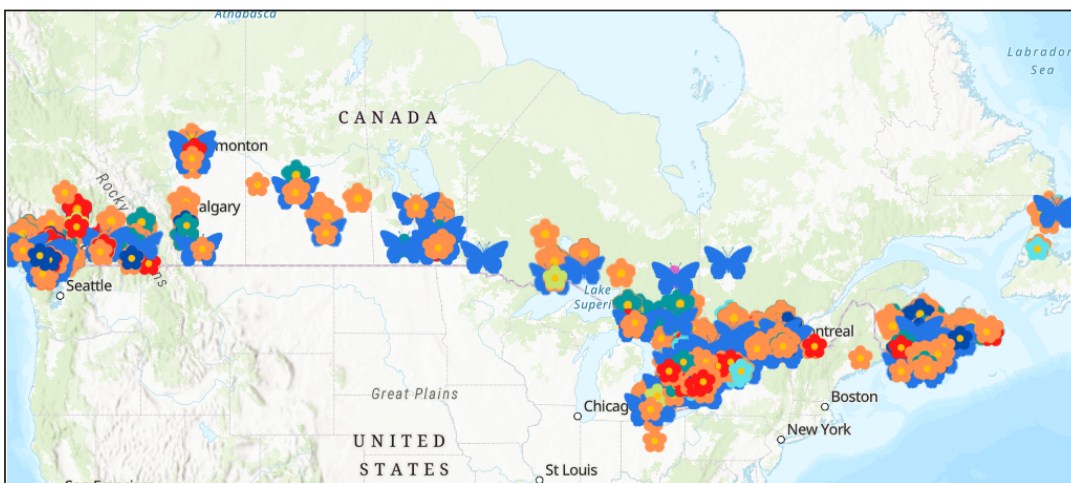


### Legend

#### 2023 Plantings

- Residential garden
- Community garden
- Private Property
- Private business garden
- Public park garden
- School/daycare garden
- Street/boulevard parking
- Other

#### Butterflyways



## Objective

Protect, preserve, and sustainably manage a healthy diversity of native species.

# Biodiversity

## Initiatives

| Initiatives                                | Action  | Category             | Status      |
|--|---|----------------------|-------------|
| Pollinator Protection                      | Promote and support initiatives to restore and create pollinator-friendly spaces        | Education            | In progress |
| Reforestation                              | Promote and support reforestation, increase of native trees and native species planting | Education            | In progress |
| Tree preservation and protection           | Develop and implement the tree preservation and protection By-law                       | Legislation          | In progress |
| Control and Management of invasive species | Contribute to and promote the appropriate control and management of invasive species    | Education            | In progress |
| Road Ecology                               | Analyze the possibilities to implement road ecology, and implement where possible       | Policy and Operation | Proposed    |
| Tree canopy in public spaces               | Strive to increase tree canopy cover in public spaces                                   | Operation            | In progress |
| Wildlife Protection                        | Collaborate, promote, and contribute to wildlife protection                             | Education            | Proposed    |
| Biodiversity inventory                     | Collaborate with biodiversity inventories, especially with Species at Risk              | Education            | Proposed    |

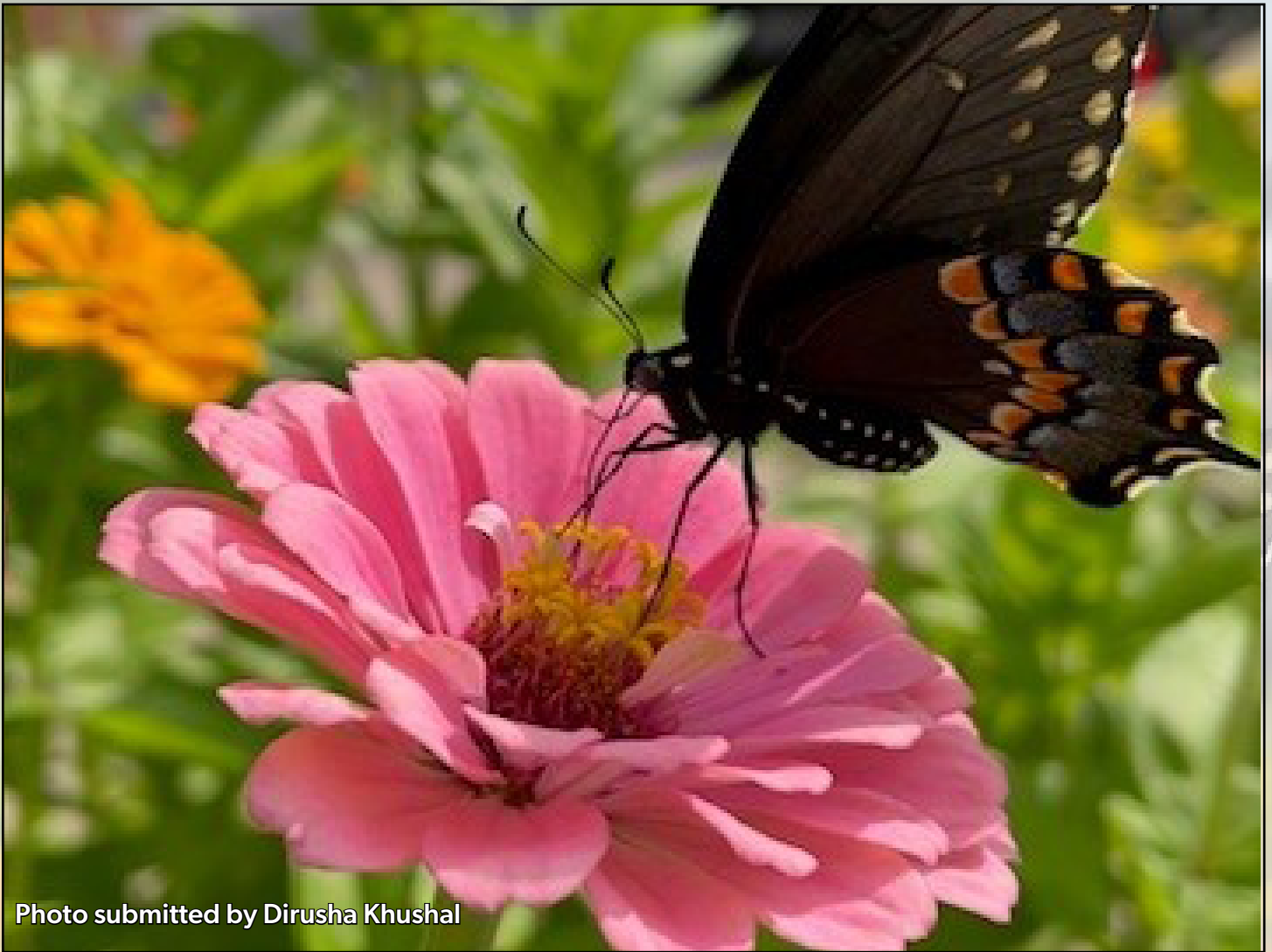


Photo submitted by Dirusha Khushal

"We need more environmental education and programs to connect the community to the land because what we know we care for and protect."

**East Gwillimbury Resident during the Community Workshops  
March 2023**

# Empowerment

## Achievements

### Seed Bank

With the collaboration and active engagement of the East Gwillimbury Gardeners, the East Gwillimbury Public Library has a collection of seeds that residents can use in their gardens. This supports the pollinator gardens initiative by providing free native flowers and produce seeds to the public.

## Objective

Promote and enhance the connection between staff, community and the environment.

## Initiatives

| Initiatives                          | Action   | Category             | Status      |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------|
| Environmental Communication Strategy | Develop and implement an Environmental Communication Strategy                    | Education            | In progress |
| Environmental Calendar               | Develop and implement a calendar for environment-related campaigns and events    | Events and Education | In progress |
| Environmental Advisory Committees    | Support the local and regional Environmental Advisory Committees                 | Policy               | In progress |
| Waste Reduction                      | Promote waste reduction  | Education            | In progress |
| Local Water Conservation Strategy    | Promote the implementation of the Regional Long Term Water Conservation Strategy | Policy and Education | In progress |
| Pollinators Campaign                 | Promote and support pollinator campaigns   | Education            | In progress |
| Sustainable Events Policy            | Develop and promote a sustainable events policy                                  | Education            | In progress |



Photo submitted by Robert Alsop

"The intimate relationship between social well-being and environmental health is well-established. We all need to care deeply for the environment because we depend on it for the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and everything else we need to live."

**East Gwillimbury Environmental Advisory Committee  
September 2023**



## Final Remarks

### Timeframe

This strategy will be reviewed every four years with annual reports to Council.

The timeline is dependent upon specific plans to implement this strategy. These plans will also determine costing and key performance indicators.

### Funding this Strategy

From the 45 actions listed, 12 new initiatives are proposed and will require a plan for implementation and budget funding.

There are 11 specific plans, strategies, and campaigns in progress that will require budget allocation in the coming years.

Where possible, staff will seek funding through provincial and federal grant funding sources.



Photo submitted by Meagan Potter

# Appendix: Background Information and Policy Context

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, municipal governments are responsible for local green innovation, are on the front lines of climate change and disaster mitigation and are responsible for building natural and built infrastructure to support climate action. “With municipalities influencing roughly half of Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions, it’s essential to scale up local solutions to transition to a resilient low-carbon future by 2050.”<sup>1</sup>

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario recognizes the municipal role in water stewardship, waste diversion, climate change, environmental assessments, and, more specifically, in managing aggregate resources and excess soil. Municipalities play a crucial role in safeguarding local environmental quality, building resilience, and protecting residents from climate change events.<sup>2</sup>

As well, the Municipal Act states that a municipality may provide any service or thing that is considered necessary or desirable for the public and produce by-laws respecting the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the municipality, including respecting climate change (Part II – Section 10 – Number 5).<sup>3</sup>

Several bodies of environmental-related policies and legislation, directly and indirectly, impact the Town’s operations. The Canadian environmental policy context consists of international commitments and agreements, national, provincial, regional, and local strategies, master plans and action plans that shape how governments and communities plan and use the territory and its resources. The following section provides a snapshot of the most relevant environmental policies and legislation guiding EG.

## International

In December 2015, Canada and 194 other countries reached the Paris Agreement, to fight climate change as an effort to limit the global average temperature rise below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

The Agreement and accompanying decisions recognize the essential roles of all levels of government, civil society, the private sector and financial institutions in responding to climate change and affirm the importance of engagement with all levels of government. It also identifies the need to respect, promote and consider the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, human rights and gender equality when taking climate action. It includes the need for a just transition of the workforce to a lower-carbon economy, the creation of decent work and quality jobs, education, public participation, and public access to information.<sup>4</sup>

Later, in 2016, the United Nations created the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Canada has incorporated them into every aspect of national policy to guide the federal environmental agenda, which impacts each level of government including municipal.

## Federal

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act (1973) supports and promotes environmental management, protection, enhancement, and wise use of the environment while recognizing the crucial importance of prevention, mitigation and remediation, responsibility, and adequate administration.<sup>5</sup> The Fisheries Act (1985) provides a framework for the proper management and control of fisheries, and the conservation and protection of fish, their habitat, and ways to prevent pollution.<sup>6</sup> The Canada Water Act (1985) focuses on the management of Canada’s water resources, and the research/planning/implementation of programs that relate to the conservation, development, and utilization of water resources.<sup>7</sup>

In 2008, The Federal Sustainable Development Act (FSDA) was consolidated to provide the legal framework for developing and implementing a Federal Sustainable Development Strategy that makes decision-making related to sustainable development more transparent while holding Parliament accountable. It also promotes coordinated action within the Canadian Government to advance sustainable development that respects Canada’s domestic and international obligations relating to sustainable development, with the intention of improving quality of life for Canadians.<sup>8</sup>

## Appendix: Background Information and Policy Context

In February 2022, the Federal Government launched the fifth Federal Sustainability Strategy 2022 – 2026 (FSDS) setting out sustainable development goals, targets, milestones, and implementation strategies from an environmental perspective, based on the 17 SDGs.<sup>9</sup> This strategy includes Indigenous communities' involvement and risk management (including climate change) as strategic elements to achieve the goals. Together the FSDA and the FSDS provide a national framework for environmental-related policy and legislation.

The Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (2016) intends to meet emissions reduction targets, grow the economy, and build resilience to a changing climate. The plan includes a pan-Canadian approach to pricing carbon pollution and measures to achieve reductions across all sectors of the economy. In addition, it aims to drive innovation and growth by increasing technology development and adoption to ensure Canadian businesses are competitive in the global low-carbon economy. It also includes actions to advance climate change adaptation and build resilience to climate impacts across the country.<sup>10</sup>

The Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act became law in 2021, to ensure transparency and accountability as the federal government works to deliver on its targets. The Act requires public participation and independent advice to guide the Government of Canada's efforts. Part of these efforts include achieving Net-Zero by 2050. Achieving net-zero means the country's economy either emits no greenhouse gases or offsets its emissions.<sup>11</sup>

The Sustainable Fisheries Framework contains practical applications of the Fisheries Act. It provides the basis for ensuring that Canadian fisheries support the conservation and sustainable use of resources, establishes a precautionary approach to fisheries management, provides the basis for an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, includes tools to monitor and assess environmentally sustainable initiatives, and combines new and evolving fisheries management policies with current ones.<sup>12</sup>

The Great Lakes Protection Initiative is a joint effort with the United States, that aims to tackle the most pressing challenges affecting Great Lakes water quality and health. Priority areas of action include work with partners to protect the Great Lakes, restore areas of concern, prevent toxic and nuisance algae, improve the health of coastal wetlands, identify at-risk nearshore waters, reduce harmful chemicals, engage Indigenous Peoples, and engage the public through citizen science.<sup>13</sup>

During the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, 2023, the Federal Government reaffirmed the commitment of developing Canada's first National Adaptation Strategy made in 2020. The Strategy will outline how the Canadian economy and society can be more resilient and prepared for the impacts of climate change. It is presented as an opportunity to unite all government orders through shared priorities, cohesive action, and a whole-of-society approach. The Strategy will include a national monitoring and evaluation system to measure progress and deliver outcomes for increased collaboration.<sup>14</sup>

### Provincial

The Province of Ontario has built a robust environmental framework aiming for clean growth, which is guided by the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). The PPS provides policy direction on planning and development, placing municipal operations as a key factor for implementation. The PPS provided room for the creation of the Greenbelt Plan, and incorporates policies aiming for strong, healthy communities, wise management of resources, protection of the environment, and public health and safety.<sup>15</sup>

The Ontario Environmental Plan guides actions to reduce waste that goes to landfills, keep water safe and clean, protect air, protect natural spaces and species, address climate change, hold polluters accountable, and support infrastructure development while ensuring environmental protection.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, the Province has developed strategies related to waste management and the blue box program (soon to transition to producer responsibility),<sup>17</sup> to reduce litter and waste, protect the environment, promote innovation, and stimulate growth. The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, a watershed-based legislated plan was also

designed to improve water quality, protect natural heritage, address impacts of invasive species and climate change, and promote sustainable use of the lake.<sup>18</sup>

## Regional

The legislation regarding the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt governs 69% of York Region's land. This means that the Regional Municipality of York is committed to and directly responsible for generating environmental-related policies and legislation that contribute to preserving and enhancing the natural heritage and protecting agricultural ecosystems.

This legislation requires two levels of regional analysis, one is based on ecosystems (Lake Simcoe Watershed, Oak Moraine Ridges, Greater Golden Horseshoe), and the other focuses on municipal boundaries (York Region and local municipalities).

The Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is one of the most dynamic and fast-growing regions in North America. It is home to more than two-thirds of Ontario's population and more than one-quarter of Canada's. The GGH also has some of the most important Canadian productive farmland and hosts crucial environments in terms of ecosystem services and biodiversity, including the Oak Ridges Moraine. In this regard the Greenbelt was introduced (2005) for the sustainable growth of the region, to provide clarity on where development and conservation can occur to protect the ecosystem, including the agricultural ones. The Greenbelt Plan,<sup>19</sup> together with the Growth Plan<sup>20</sup> and the Oak Ridge Moraine Conservation Plan<sup>21</sup> establish the land use framework to support the economy while promoting environmental and social sustainability. The core mandate of this policy is to permanently protect agricultural lands, water systems and natural heritage systems. These guidelines have been carefully considered and are included in East Gwillimbury's Official Plan.

There are four important regional policies that relate directly or indirectly to environmental action: the Official Plan (OP), the Strategic Plan, the Greening Strategy, and the Climate Change Action Plan. The Regional OP directly establishes sustainability objectives through the Sustainable Environmental Goal of the Plan, which is *"to protect, restore, and enhance the natural environment for current and future generations so that it will sustain life, maintain health, safeguard from natural hazards and provide a high quality of life"*. The objectives seek to identify, protect, restore, and enhance natural ecosystems, water resources for the long term, the Regional Greenland System and its features and functions, water systems health, natural features (including wetlands, woodlands, and landscape), while minimizing risks and natural hazards to human health and safety. Therefore, the Regional OP sets the parameters for sustainable local development, guided by provincial policy and includes the long-term conservation of the unique natural features, environmental health, and well-being of York Region.<sup>22</sup>

The Region's Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 establishes four areas of focus. The area of Sustainable Environment focuses on the need to protect and sustain the natural and built environment and reduce the ecological impact. This area of focus defines three objectives: delivering and promoting environmentally sustainable services, encouraging growth in the Region's centres, corridors, and built-up urban areas; and enhancing and preserving green space. Each one identifies key activities and performance measures that allow to track advance.<sup>23</sup> Most of the activities that the Regional OP established are projects carried out by the Town of East Gwillimbury (see Section Environmental Initiatives).

The Climate Change Action Plan, released in 2020, defines two outcomes to work toward: reduce Greenhouse gas emissions with a long-term goal of becoming a net-zero Region by 2050, and increase resilience and capacity for the Region to withstand and respond to current and future climate events. These outcomes will be achieved by working on three priority action areas: resilient communities and infrastructure, low-carbon living, and supporting an equitable transition. Each priority action area defines its associated actions, partnerships,

action areas, and general timelines. Local municipalities are considered direct partners for 15 of the 26 actions.<sup>24</sup> The Greening Strategy, released in 2022, not only builds on the Climate Change Action Plan, and the previous environmental and sustainability strategies, but it also defines four action areas that align with previous policy and work: 1) Environmental Land Protection and Preservation; 2) Community stewardship and education; 3) Enhancement and rehabilitation; 4) Innovation and knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

The Region’s Circular Economy Roadmap was released in 2022 and is based on the 2020 Integrated Waste Management Master Plan’s goal of “nothing goes to waste”. It identifies four priority areas and provides alternatives to ownership.<sup>26</sup>

| Priority Areas  | Action Areas   | Alternatives to Ownership    |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Economic vitality, healthy communities, sustainable environment, and good government. | Sustainable food systems, reuse and sharing, community capacity and connections, circular procurement, and asset management and built environment. | Renting, borrowing, sharing. |

The action areas guide research, pilots, policy development and partnerships over the next three years. Also, the first three action areas are community-led. This road map provides essential guidance to include circular economic initiatives in local strategies and operations.

Additionally, as part of the suite of services, the Region has developed the Integrated Waste Management Master Plan,<sup>27</sup> the Long-Term Water Conservation Strategy,<sup>28</sup> and the Water and Wastewater Master Plan<sup>29</sup> all with a strong emphasis on efficiency, sustainability, and reliability.

## Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) is the local watershed management organization dedicated to conserving, restoring, and managing the Lake Simcoe watershed. The LSRCA focuses its attention on salt and phosphorus management, flood prevention, climate change adaptation, source water protection, invasive species, forestry, natural heritage, and stormwater.

The LSRCA’s mission is to collaborate to protect and restore the Lake Simcoe watershed with research, policy, and action. In this regard, there are several programs and plans that, in partnership with local municipalities, seek to accomplish its mandate. East Gwillimbury has participated in various initiatives and accomplished important milestones, such as the award-winning Salt Management Plan.

## Local

East Gwillimbury has developed a robust policy framework as part of the Updated Official Plan (OP) (2022) which enables further initiatives and operations. The Plan recognizes and guides natural heritage conservation, promotes sustainability, mandates climate action, watershed planning, energy and water conservation, air quality, as well as emergency planning and green building. The most remarkable highlight of the OP is after the town is fully developed, East Gwillimbury will remain 83% green.<sup>30</sup>

The Strategic Plan, built to guide the Town’s operations and services for the current term of Council (2022-2026), establishes environmental stewardship as one of the five strategic priorities, which will:

- Support the stewardship, preservation, conservation, and enhancement of the natural environment in East Gwillimbury.
- Develop and implement policies that support environmental sustainability and best practices.

## Appendix: Background Information and Policy Context

- Develop and implement programs and policies that support climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency.

The Thinking Green Sustainability Strategy (2009), was made up of four pillars to guide corporate actions: Sustainable Development, Municipal Operations, Natural Environment, and Energy Conservation. This strategy endorsed the creation of the Community Energy Plan (CEP), which was also approved in 2009. These strategies helped support the Green Fleet Strategy as an initiative to reduce GHG emissions from Town operations.

The Thinking Green Standards (TGS), also speak to the Town's mandate for sustainable development. The TGS represent a commitment from the Town and developers to ensure high building standards to promote energy efficiency and environmental conservation.

It is anticipated that during the 2022 to 2026 Council term, the Environmental Strategy will be approved, the Community Energy Plan will be updated, and the Climate Adaptation Plan will be designed and presented to Council for consideration.

# References

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- 25 York Region Greening Strategy, 2022.
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- 27 [York Region Integrated Waste Management Master Plan.](#)
- 28 [York Region Long Term Water Conservation Strategy.](#)
- 29 York Region Water and Wastewater Master Plan, 2022.
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"It does not matter what colour we are, it does not matter the race we come from, and it certainly does not matter the title we hold, it doesn't. The two things we share in commonality: there is only one Mother Earth for all, only one. The Creator did not give one Mother Earth for the red people, the white people, the black people, the yellow people, or the brown people. He gifted all of us, people, with one Mother Earth, and we all have responsibility to her. And the second, we are all related in the human family, all related. So, let us show our relationship through love and kindness, let us show that relationship through respect for who we are to one another, and let us show that relationship on how we move forward to find those best ways to ensure that the land, the nature, the climate, is protected, is respected, and that will be here today and forever more, not only for my grandchildren but for your grandchildren and your descendants"

**Professor Claudette Commanda, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabe First Nation.  
Opening of the Nature-based Climate Solutions Summit.  
Ottawa, February 2020**